DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 488 FL 007 456

AUTHOR Taylor, Harvey M.
TITLE The Role of the Reading Teacher in Adult Basic Education - TESL.
PUB DATE [73]
NOTE 30p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; Adult Learning; Adult Literacy; *Adult Reading Programs; Cultural Differences; *Educational Diagnosis; *English (Second Language); Handwriting; Individualized Instruction; Interference (Language Learning); Oral Reading; Pronunciation; Reading Ability; *Reading Instruction; Second Language Learning; Silent Reading; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

In teaching reading in English as a second language, teachers must diagnose student difficulties and individualize instruction. They must analyze why students are in the course, determine what their individual reading backgrounds are in their native language and in English, and adapt class activities and reading materials to students' expectations and needs. The adult ESL reader's main problems involve: (1) working with English in its written form, (2) reading about an unfamiliar culture, and (3) lack of English language competence. The student's native language may not use the Roman alphabet and may have a different writing, punctuation or organizational system. The teacher must sort out students' language backgrounds and identify particular reading and pronunciation problems deriving from that background. Comprehension problems may arise from vocabulary pertaining to American culture, which must be explained. Problems in English language competence often depend on the student's literacy in his native language. Texts for ESL adult courses should be geared to students' interests, whether comic books, sports pages, newspapers or professional literature. Students often are blocked by unfamiliar vocabulary; therefore they should be encouraged to skip the word or to try to glean its meaning from the context, to avoid constant dictionary searching. (CHK)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

The Role of the Reading Teacher in Adult Basic Education-TESL

by

Harvey M. Taylor
English Language Institute
The University of Michigan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED119488

Any course that teaches reading should be based on a knowledge of how good readers read. Unfortunately for the adult basic education-TESL reading teacher, we do not yet know exactly how a good reader gets meaning from written material in his first language, much less in a second language. Furthermore, we are not even all in agreement as to what a "good" ESL reader is — is he thorough though slow, is he able to read fast and grasp general meaning quickly, or is he able to read for enjoyment?

It is a fact, however, that "poor" English second language (ESL) readers seem to get little value from their reading because of certain types of problems; on the other hand, there is a pattern of things "good" readers generally do and do not do as they read. Until recently very little other than the impressions of experienced ESL reading teachers has appeared in print. In fact, the majority of ESL-reading articles in America have dealt primarily with the ways a given teacher found to use some reading selection while teaching English to foreign students. Kenneth Croft pointed out that "nobody, it seemed, had any contributions to make to a general theory of teaching reading" (Croft in Croft, ed. 1972:163).

FL007456

As the methodology of teaching English to speakers of other languages in America has moved out from under the domination of one or another of the previously accepted theories of second language learning, the foreign student's need to read English and to read it well has begun to be openly

admitted. Fortunately, European English teaching never completely lost sight of the importance of reading in ESL. Now no longer is American TESL simply oral English teaching, either. The literature of the 70's reflects this change; however, as yet no monolithic doctrine or theory has emerged to control or even to guide the teaching of reading to non-native speakers of English. The teacher in ABE who attempts to meet the reading needs of ESL students is often faced with inadequate materials and no clear theoretical guidelines for either producing other materials or for teaching those available.

What can be done? First, the ESL reading teacher must have a clear idea of what "reading" is to be for his adult ESL students. Some students assume that reading is the oral pronunciation of written English sentences; yet these students would not agree even among themselves on the degree of pronunciation perfection and fluency they should aim for. Their only previous experience with reading has been in their native language, which involved simply matching the written symbols with a spoken language they fortunately already knew. Reading in a second language involves not only this matching problem, but the whole matter of understanding a new language with its writing system, pronunciation, vocabulary, culture, and syntax.

During the summer of 1967 some of the ESL staff of the Department of Education in Guam with whom the author was working on a bilingual education workshop were put on the spot by a politically influential elementary school teacher; at issue was that teacher's assumption that pronunciation from the page equals reading.

She demonstrated to the workshop staff the "reading ability" of a group of her first grade students as support for her belief that no special bilingual program was necessary for the children of Guam. Her students, all non-native speakers of English, sounded like Americans as they read; therefore, she maintained that they were reading just as well as native speakers. The sad fact was that her performers had no more comprehension of what they were reading from their books (repeating from memory?) than if they had been twenty tape recorders playing back someone else's voice, which in effect they were doing. These were first grade children "reading" to us about Dick and Jane and Spot. Readers in adult basic education classes can turn out to be similarly mechanical performers. These "readers" in Guam thought pronouncing was reading, because that was what their reading teacher was teaching them; many adult basic education students come to their ESL classes with this same assumption. It is up to the ESL teacher to make clear what reading really is.

The primary social need of the adult ESL reader is an ability to understand what he is reading. If he has an adequate command of oral English, then he needs to learn only what the written words sound like and be able to supply the necessary sentence intonation and stress features. When he thus hears his own voice, either actually or imagined during silent reading, he will recognize the meaning of what he is reading — at least so the assumption goes. For this type of student, the ESL reading teacher will be able to borrow many of the techniques used by American elementary school reading teachers; however, the teacher's problem is

that this advanced-English type of student almost never shows up in an adult basic education ESL reading class.

The rest of our students, even though adults, will share the main problem of the children in Guam: even if they learn to say the written material acceptably, the meaning they attach to what they read will not be what a native speaker of English would attach to it. The problems the teacher faces in meeting the needs of these students will be our concern here.

These problems of the teacher can be classed as (1) those which relate to the fact that the student is working with the English language in its written form, (2) those which relate to the fact that he is reading about a culture unfamiliar to him, and (3) those which relate to the student's lack of English language competence. The adult ESL student deserves help from his reading teacher in dealing with these three types of problems. The effective teacher will try to analyze each student's problems and begin the attack on them at these sources.

Problems related to the written forms of English

The teacher needs to know the previous reading background of each student. Is he literate in his native language, and to what degree? What is the writing system of his native language—alphabetic (Roman or non-Roman), syllabic, or logographic? Has he learned to read English or any other language which uses the Roman alphabet? If so, how "good" is he in reading that language?

In most countries from which ABE students normally come today, anyone who has gone through eight or nine years of schooling will have

been exposed to one or more languages which use a Roman alphabet. In many of these countries English is the most common second language being studied. Therefore, the ABE-TESL teacher can expect that most of his younger students will be able to use the Roman alphabet. Older adults who attended schools some years ago may not have had this exposure to even the Roman alphabet, and with them the teacher will need to use materials that borrow techniques from reading readiness programs of American kindergartens. However, these materials will have to be especially geared to the ESL student, and preferably geared to the adult ESL student.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of a part of a diagram titled "Sorting Out Kinds of Readers," developed by Rita Wong of the English Language Institute of The University of Michigan in 1973. It is included here in this slightly modified form by permission of the author. In following this "flow chart" from the left, we choose the adult route since our non-

---

(insert Figure 1 somewhere near here)

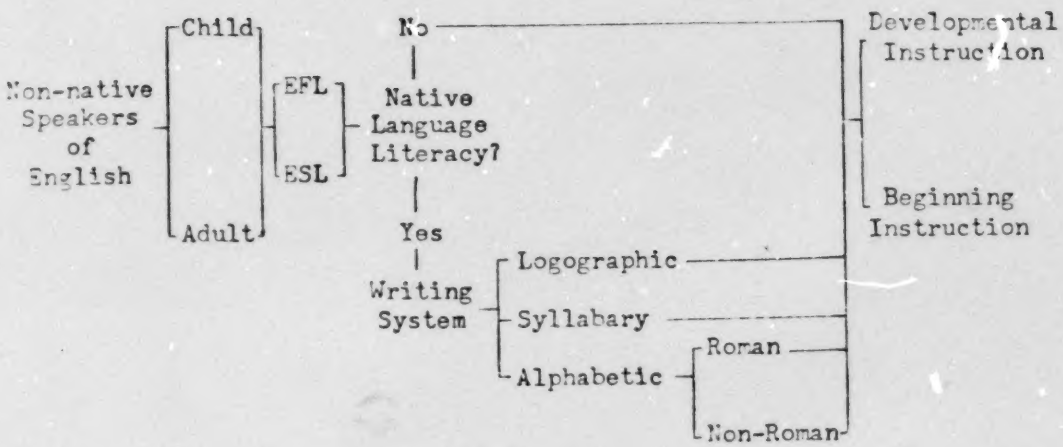
Non-native Speakers of English
Child
Adult
EFL
ESL
Native Language Literacy?
No
Yes
Writing System
Logographic
Syllabary
Alphabetic
Roman
Non-Roman
Developmental Instruction
Beginning Instruction

Figure 1

native speakers of English will all be adults. Since they will be studying English for use in America, their study will be English as a second language (ESL). From this point we will need to determine which of the variables exist for each student, and then we will need to adapt our teaching to the variety of student needs that result from these differing backgrounds.

Students who have learned to read Romanized letters for only a language other than English may not be able to read English with any semblance of English pronunciation. Unless they have been taught to do otherwise, they will pronounce English words as though they were reading in that other language. If they do, the teacher will need to give careful instruction and considerable practice in the regularities that exist in the pronunciation of written English. Even English consonants with their generally regular pronunciation hold different problems for students from various language backgrounds. For Japanese, certain other Orientals, and some Africans, r and l will be confused. For most foreign students, the English th's (breath vs. breathe) will cause problems. Latin American students may find ch and sh confusing.

English vowels will cause even greater pronunciation problems for every student, regardless of language background, but not everyone will have the same problems. Of perhaps greatest communicative importance in oral English are English word stress and sentence intonation patterns. If a student errs very much with either of these, he is apt not to be understood by the average American.

All of the above has had to do with the pronunciation of written English. What part does this oral pronunciation actually play in silent reading? Good pronouncers from a written page are not necessarily good comprehenders of what they read, as the Guam situation showed.

Evelyn Hatch of UCLA has some interesting observations on the relationship between pronunciation (articulation) and the ESL student's reading ability. "Having watched students poring over reading assignments at 100 WPM, observing the amount of lip movement, noting the tension involved in the reading process, we began to wonder whether the articulation and acoustic elements might be more important in silent reading than research had shown. Everyone agrees it's an important factor in reading aloud, but we felt it was important in silent reading in addition" (1973:4).

Based on a study of Bantu r and l by Serpell (1968), she and her colleagues tested to see if Spanish speaking children who mispronounce fit so it sounded like feet would when reading silently think that fit means feet. The tests showed that they did in fact think that fit was feet, that grin was a color (green), etc. (1973:5). This seems to indicate that at least certain readers (or speakers) of ESL will experience misreading of vocabulary items if their normal mispronunciation sounds like other words they know.

It would seem, on the other hand, that more advanced readers would have fewer such problems, since they would have been more frequently exposed to the "correct spelling" of potentially confusing words. However, I have had Japanese students who have been reading English for years who still get hung up on r/l minimal pairs, such as reading blight as bright.

They probably had read bright hundreds of times and could have spelled it correctly if asked to; yet, they could not detect that blight even looked different. The articulation they were wrongly supplying to blight when reading it silently completely blotted out the visual difference. Admittedly, part of the problem could be that they didn't know what blight meant, so instead had read in a word they did know. But even when they realized that the context didn't make sense, some continued to try to find out what was bright in the sentence, still not noticing the spelling difference.

Word pronunciation, then, is important in silent reading. And I would assume from the frequent misinterpreting of English written questions and exclamations that the ESL student is missing their meanings because he is not supplying them with their correct intonations. Perhaps this inability to supply the appropriate intonation for a phrase or sentence is one of the main reasons why ESL students are generally mystified when they read irony, sarcasm, and most English jokes.

As Hatch summarizes, "the phonological element does not disappear in silent reading" (1973:5). Any time a student misreads a word or fails to supply crucial intonation or accentuation, he is at least slowed down in his silent reading, if not actually brought to a stop. It seems that a clear connection has been established between student silent reading problems and at least certain of his pronunciation errors. If English happened to be written more phonemically, not only would American children have less trouble learning to read, but the adult ESL learner and his teacher would be spared these and other problems that are related to the English writing system.

Before we leave problems that relate to the written form of English, it should be noted that the ESL student needs to be clearly taught about certain English writing conventions. We space between all words (some languages do not space between every word but only after nouns or verbs, etc.). English punctuation shows grammatical as well as thought divisions, with commas identifying non-restrictives, items in a series, etc. English chapter and paragraph divisions are normally not completely haphazard, but in so-called "good" writing these indicate the separation of ideas. These facts about punctuation and other English writing conventions will not be obvious to the ESL student whose native language has either no paragraphing or else bases paragraphing upon criteria other than logical thought organization. Indentation of paragraphs is also not a universal practice. The ABE-TESL teacher cannot assume that the students know all or any of this, and therefore must assist any students with problems here.

One further area of confusion for ESL readers is American handwriting styles. The reading teacher will notice immediately that the English handwriting of students from certain areas is almost impossible to read; the formation of the letters and the ways they are joined are so unexpected that it may take a number of weeks before the teacher can read some of the foreign handwriting styles with any degree of accuracy. The reverse happens to some ESL students. They cannot read what the teacher writes on the blackboard (no teacher necessarily produces his best penmanship at the board). The letters they see there don't look like those they see in printed style in books or those they have seen friends

write in English or other Romanized languages. American capital letters and uncrossed t's at the end of words cause numerous reading problems for ESL students. A bit of early explanation of these points can go a long way toward easing students through the transition from their style of writing to the teacher's.

At one time ESL teachers were encouraged to teach reading by using some of the speed reading techniques that seem to enable certain trained Americans to grasp the meaning of increasingly larger sections of written English. Exercises for teaching students to read longer and longer groups of words were often recommended. However, for ESL students "the research seems to reject most activities which are concerned with the mechanics of reading once initial reading has been introduced" (Hatch 1973:6). Hatch discusses teaching ESL students to recognize either words (through "sight reading") or word spelling patterns (of the fat, sat, bat type). The latter is probably one of the most widely used techniques for improving ESL reading skills, i.e., speed of recognition of words. Hatch says that "the approach seems to work fairly well if comprehension is also stressed and if the method is supplemented with experience materials and some phonics work... The weight of accumulating research from several disciplines stresses that once basic skills are acquired in reading, we should relax our emphasis on pattern recognition of small units and concentrate on the decoding process. This, of course, is easier said than done" (Hatch 1973:6, 7).

Problems related to unfamiliar American culture

If the reader of a text in a foreign language has a general understanding of what it is all about, he will be able to fill in from the context some of the meaning of unfamiliar words. If he sees supposedly familiar words used in new settings, he may be able to get the meaning from the context if he understands that context of situation. However, if he is reading about something which is an entirely new cultural concept to him, even if he "knows" every word he sees, he may not be able to understand the gist of what he is reading. John Povey points out the cultural background which the native speaker of English brings to everything he reads in English, for "in every piece which we read, we make many cultural presuppositions with unthinking confidence, most of which are going to be quite literally foreign to the non-native speaker" (Povey in Allen and Campbell, eds. 1972:190).

In any language the cultural background of each writer is reflected clearly in what is written. When an ESL student first reads, "Let's go to a drive-in," he may thing of a driveway, since he knows what drive and in mean. Even if he knows it is either an eating place or a theater, he may not grasp its place in American culture. In his country cars may not be plentiful and therefore people may never watch movies or eat in their cars; there would be no theaters or restaurants which cater to the driving public. In America the student may also be without a car and never have had the opportunity to find out what a drive-in is and how it fits into the dating patterns of young Americans.

Again, if the American social system does not classify people on the same bases of age, seniority, or education that the foreign student expects, he may miss the wealth-is-status import of innumerable things he reads. Regardless of whether the teacher feels like defending any given facet of American culture, he is responsible to either explain or discuss those cultural points in the student's reading selections which are crucial for comprehension.

On the other hand, the culturally sensitive teacher will be tempted to give a lengthy lecture in the reading class on every cultural point brought out in the reading selections. J. R. Gladstone gives two questions for the teacher to ask himself when deciding what points relating to some cultural pattern should be taught: "1. Is this information needed by the students for the proper understanding of the habit and/or concept? 2. Am I, as a native speaker, sure about this detail? If the answer to either question is No, do not bother about teaching or discussing that aspect of the cultural pattern" (Gladstone in Allen and Campbell, eds, 1972:194).

One workable solution provides information by picture, brief written description, or oral discussion of any cultural points that must be understood before the main thrust of a reading selection can be understood. Other points, though interesting, will probably have to be ignored until the students are capable of handling short but pertinent oral explanations or written discussions. Videotaped ESL language lessons, such as the ones the author is currently developing for University of Michigan ELI students, can point out culturally significant facts and be a time-saving and forceful

way to present such information for individual study.

In a majority of the ESL textbooks on the market very little has been done systematically to handle the cultural elements which abound in ESL reading selections. Considerable interest was evident during the early 70's in the cultural element in second language teaching, but recent works still do not clearly tie the cultural component of ESL to reading. It will therefore be up to the teacher not only to develop his own sensitivity to reading-culture problems but also to develop in his students a sympathetic sensitivity toward American culture.

Problems related to English language competence

Our discussion so far has skirted the greater issue of the relationship of ESL reading to student knowledge of English. The mechanics of reading discussed above do cause problems for the ESL reading student, but his general lack of knowledge of English will prove to be his greatest problem. Related to this will be his ability to read his native language.

In their native language, ESL students do not all read equally well. Some are slow readers, but have good comprehension; others are both slow readers and poor comprehenders. Some are able to read fast with good comprehension so long as their native language reading material is a comic book, a cheap novel, or a sports page; others are able to read literature in their native language, their own newspapers, and scholarly works—all with good comprehension and sometimes with fantastic retention.

These student variables will be evident in an ESL reading class as

well. Can a Spanish comic book devotee be expected to read even simplified English literature and discuss any more than the exciting parts (if he reads that far)?

A typing student can be said to have learned to type when he chooses to type rather than hand write his personal correspondence; an ESL student has probably "learned to read" when he chooses to read English for pleasure—whether it be a comic book, a newspaper, a magazine, or a novel. At least this sort of reader is definitely comprehending enough of what he is reading to gain self-satisfaction, regardless of the struggle involved. George E. Carroll discussed with his ESL students "the difference between intensive and extensive reading, between for example, the comprehension passages in their textbooks, which they should read slowly and thoroughly, finding out the meaning of each word, and novels and other books which they should not read slowly, but rather, quickly for enjoyment. There was general agreement that stopping to look up words did spoil the enjoyment of a good story, but it was apparent that many seemed to suffer from a sense of guilt if they read merely for enjoyment" (Carroll in Allen and Campbell, eds., 1972:180).

In adult basic education, it will probably be next-to-futile to attempt to change a student's interests and therefore his preference for certain types of reading materials. If the ABE-TESL reading class is to have any sort of consistent attendance, the highly educated member must not feel he is being served American children's books as his reading fare, nor can the sports fan be fed more than a little of American political

thought. Too often in attempting to find "the right book" for teaching ESL reading, the teacher selects something that either interests only the teacher, or something which the teacher feels has content the student ought to become interested in. Very few of the currently advertised ESL adult reading texts are of intrinsic interest to anyone except the young adult foreigner studying for a degree in an American college or university. Since ABE is not meant primarily for these students, the content matter of the readings chosen for ABE-TESL must be selected to meet the interests of the students enrolled. The supposed adventure or thrill of learning to read a foreign language disappears soon enough when such reading is found to be difficult; uninteresting or inappropriate subject matter can only make a difficult task distasteful.

For the more advanced students, the teacher has appropriate reading material available in the daily newspaper, magazines, and even comic books. Some of these selections may need to be edited or simplified by the teacher to make them fit lesser skilled students' abilities. However, for what will probably be the majority of the students, the teacher may have to write his own simple one-pagers in order to capitalize upon the abilities and interests of his particular students. (There is no law in the annals of reading teaching which requires that the entire class read identical material.)

All ESL students can be expected to have problems with American cultural points that come up in their reading. Occasionally a student will refuse to read something which, though appropriate in an American setting, is offensive to him. One Michigan-ELI student objected to the subject of death because of cultural taboos. A Mid-East student stated that any

discussion of future plans for individuals was presumptuous, since no human being can know his future. Cultural stereotyping will have blinded certain students to the possibility of women being doctors, scientists, or religious leaders, and so they will not be able to cope with feminine pronouns in certain English reading contexts. The sensitive teacher will attempt to recognize the cultural causes of student resistance, and not just blame it on their reading inabilities.

Once the content problems have been squarely faced, the teacher still has the technique problem: What do I have them do with what I have assigned? Do they read it at home with a bilingual dictionary or aloud in class? Do they read silently, then answer my questions? Do they make an outline of the content? Or what?

The teacher will have to determine for each student or for each group of somewhat similar students just what "reading" is to mean for the student. As discussed above, reading will not be equated with the mouthing or words found written on a page or blackboard. If a student is identifying certain written forms correctly, his oral reading may indicate his success; if he reads orally with appropriate intonation and pauses, it may be that he is reading with comprehension of the general train of thought. If, however, his pronunciation is generally very bad, it may mean that he doesn't have any idea of what words he is reading. It might also mean that although he is actually mentally correctly identifying the words and knows what they mean, he has such poor pronunciation in his oral English that no one else can understand him whether he talks or reads aloud. Since this latter

situation is probably unlikely (though I have had Japanese students who fit this description), the teacher can probably rightly assume that it would be appropriate to question the poor oral reader to see if he is comprehending what he is reading. It may be best even to omit oral reading for this type of student until his spoken English becomes considerably better.

The greatest problem for students when they read English silently is obviously that they do not comprehend the meaning of what is on the page. Yet comprehension of written English is probably one of the basic needs of the ABE-TESL student. Before the teacher can devise exercises to help the student come to an understanding of what he is reading, the problem is to find out exactly why the student does not comprehend what he is reading.

"It is difficult to give answers when we frequently do not know whether we are talking about initial or advanced reading instruction, about students who are beginners or fluent bilinguals, whether reading means mechanical decoding of words or the ability to summarize what has been read. The research in reading a second language is both interesting and extremely confusing. But as a matter of fact, we really know little about how one reads a first language let alone a second. I'm not certain that the research would be less confusing if there were more of it, but there certainly are many areas which need to be investigated" (Hatch 1973:8).

At this stage in ESL reading teaching research developments, it is probably best for the teacher to learn what has seemed to work for other teachers and then to experiment with his own students. Lack of silent

reading comprehension for the ESL student can usually be traced to one of three things: (1) unfamiliar vocabulary or the unfamiliar use of familiar vocabulary, (2) unexpected cultural implications, or (3) unknown or misunderstood syntax.

Carlos Yorio has made a survey of what a group of adult reading students thought were their problems in learning to read. He reports that these students rated vocabulary as their greatest difficulty. He goes on, "let us make it clear that to say that vocabulary constitutes one of the main obstacles for communication in a foreign language at a certain level of proficiency, does not mean that lexical items in general should be considered the most important or the only part of a language to be emphasized in the teaching situation. It simply means that once the basic patterns have been acquired and the student 'feels' that he has begun to handle the 'system' of the language, he realizes that he does not understand the meanings of the words in the patterns; ...new lexical items not only block his comprehension but also make him doubt the correctness of his syntactic choice" (Yorio 1971:112).

Students from Oriental countries seem to have immense English vocabularies, but frequently their problems can be traced to their partial knowledge of the uses/meanings of a given word. What they and all other ESL students need to learn is how to find the meaning of individual words from the context in which they appear.

What about the use of dictionaries? If the student is at all serious, he probably already has a well-worn dictionary that gives him a meaning in his own language for thousands of English words. He will use that

dictionary whenever he is reading on his own and feels the need to know a word.

Somehow the teacher must encourage the student to hold off looking up a word until he has given himself a chance to learn the word from the context. He can be told to skip the word and read on to get the general meaning of the selection without finding out a specific meaning for that word. It will go against all the earlier training of some students when the teacher tells them to guess at the meaning of a word or to ignore the word entirely; yet, if the teacher can show the student how to use the context to get general word meanings and also show him how much faster this is than using a dictionary, perhaps some changes can be brought about. "The time for the teacher to deal with these new words is not at the beginning of the lesson. Pupils must learn to face passages in which there are some unfamiliar words, and they must be trained in ways of discovering their meanings" (Elliott in Allen and Campbell, eds. 1965:175). Freeman Twaddell says that "the skill in sensible guessing at unfamiliar or partly unfamiliar words involves the conscious or unconscious use of grammatical and pragmatic clues. It is the mark of real reading as opposed to a schoolroom exercise" (Twaddell 1973:72).

Of course, certain nouns and other fairly concrete items cannot be understood solely from the context. For these, the student will need to use his bilingual dictionary; an English-English dictionary, though theoretically a superior tool, will probably be too difficult for him. In order to keep some sort of control over the use of dictionaries, the teacher can insist that no

student write anything in his native language within the text of any reading selection. Limit such notes to the margin, with the problem English form underlined for easier student reference. This does two things:

(1) The student must physically look elsewhere for the translation every time he re-reads the selection (he can be told to keep the notated margin covered until he absolutely must look for the translation); by separating the translation from the item, the student will be faced first with the English item and will have to consciously try to recall the meaning before he looks for its translation.

(2) The other benefit is that the margin will hold only so many notes; for at least some students, the teacher can make a margin crammed with translations psychologically undesirable. This may help some break their translate-everything habit.

The teacher must keep aiming the student toward not only reading with comprehension but toward reading with comprehension without outside help. But how the student attains this comprehension is important—is it through painstaking translation outside of class or is it through his own teacher-developed skills in getting word meanings from the context?

Besides their pronunciation, cultural and vocabulary problems, all ESL students have trouble with English syntax. The more elementary the students' English, the greater their problems with the grammatical relationships in what they read. They often do not know how the various words in a sentence are related to each other even when they can give an accurate meaning for each of the individual words.

English WH questions can help the teacher pin-point some of these relationship problems; once these specific problems have been identified, reading practice which necessitates a clear understanding of them can be given. In English these relationships are usually shown not by the meanings of individual words but by grammatical/syntactic signals such as word order and prepositions. A "case grammar" approach which builds upon the work of Charles Fillmore (in Bach and Harms, ed., 1968) has been profitably used by this author and others in teaching such relationships to ESL students.

Hatch mentions two related ways for teaching readers "to create a grammatical structure out of the series of images their eye fixations give them. Some people call this 'reading by structure.' [Bruce] Amble found that massive practice in reading short phrases was effective as a teaching device with Anglo fifth graders. He called this kind of reading by structure, phrase reading. [Ted] Plaister has suggested that we give foreign students practice in reading by phrases. His system meant rewriting passages so that each column was one phrase wide. This doesn't mean that Ss really read a column per eye fixation; instead it gives students information of what words should be grouped together. In a sense, it is help with the syntax of the passage. Along with a number of other ideas and motivational devices taken from regular first-language reading programs, the method has been successful with university ESL students" (Hatch 1973:7).

Of course, it is highly unlikely that the ESL reading teacher by himself will be able to teach the student all necessary English grammar. In fact, it

may be that the best we will be able to do is to help the student recognize in written English the syntax he already understands in the English he hears. He, of course, when speaking or writing may or may not be able to produce the same level of grammaticality he hears; just because he cannot produce good grammar does not necessarily mean that he cannot comprehend it. Sometimes bits of the grammar either analyzed for him by the teacher or at least presented to him in his reading texts will "click," and through his reading class he will really learn some grammar, and not just learn about it. This will depend primarily upon how this grammar point fits into the conceptualization he has of English grammar at the time he is presented with this point.

It remains a fact that if a student cannot communicate his ideas in either spoken or written English, it will be almost impossible for a reading teacher to tell if that student comprehends what he is reading. Inevitably, then, the reading teacher is going to end up doing a lot of oral communicating with students to find out if reading comprehension is taking place. For the teacher who is teaching students who either cannot or will not respond orally to a question, various exercises which require a physical rather than an oral response can be used. These can include a "treasure hunt" with written clues to follow around the room or written descriptions of something the student is to perform in some way either in or out of class. It is the teacher who must decide what exactly will encourage reading for comprehension. The author is now developing an aural English course which constantly evaluates the student's listening comprehension by requiring an active cognitive-based

reaction. Reading comprehension can similarly be checked by watching students respond to written rather than spoken stimuli.

One further problem remains in teaching students to read with comprehension. There are various types of reading in any language, each depending on the purpose of that reading. One can read to find a certain fact or to answer a question. This usually amounts to skimming rather than reading. ESL students probably do this in their own language all the time, even if it is no more than skimming newspaper headlines. Yet people generally do not skim in a foreign language unless they are very proficient in both the vocabulary and syntax of that language. Without such proficiency, it is difficult to pick up a train of thought unless one reads practically every word.

ESL teachers often assign skimming exercises for students to find the answers to given factual questions. Low-level students probably cannot profitably be taught to skim for anything other than the most visually obvious points, such as a person's name with its capital letters or a date or other numeral. Can such students really skim or do they actually just read along until they find the answer to the question by stumbling upon it in the text? If careful control is kept over the amount of time allotted for the student to find such answers, then perhaps he can be forced to skim for information.

Teaching academically oriented students to read involves a specialized activity for this specialized sort of group. Some may need to be taught to read the title and think about it before beginning to read scholarly articles. They then can be guided to look for a formal abstract or summary. They next should look for headings, pictures, diagrams, charts, or other

psulated bits of information that can help give them the general content of the article. Even if none of these are available, there will probably be a conclusion of some sort that can help them out.

Practice of this sort in previewing can be given along with outlining and main-point summarization exercises. Then the supporting arguments or data can be found and noted (not copied) under these main headings. At all times the emphasis must be upon the student's using his own words if comprehension is to be checked accurately.

Although this sort of reading is routinely taught to most adult native speakers, it has little application to any ABE-TESL student who is not academically oriented. If a particular group of students do not really need to learn this sort of skill, why teach it to them? The time can be better spent on whatever meets their actual needs and interests.

Even after completing a carefully planned reading course, some of these adults may still not be able to read English for enjoyment—or even well enough for survival in America. What can they do to improve their reading after they finish their formal classwork? Teachers often overlook the availability of appropriate reading material in the public library, and a class field trip there near the end of the course (pre-planned with the librarian, of course) can often open up ongoing reading opportunities for ESL students. Much of what is being published now for minority groups in America is written in simpler English and often has cultural settings which are nearer either to those the ESL student had in his country or to those he is living in now in America. Although it may not be suited for class study, it may

catch the attention of some individual ABE students.

Conclusion

The exact role of the ABE-TESL teacher has not as yet been clearly stated in this discussion, partly because in its details that role will change with every group of students before whom the teacher appears. A teacher can play his part by the book, literally, and through some miracle actually help a student or two improve their English reading abilities.

Or the teacher can play to his audience, analyzing why they are in the course, what their individual backgrounds are in reading both their own language and English, and adapting the class activities and the reading materials to the students' expectations and needs. The teacher's chances of helping his students should improve in proportion to his knowledge of his students and their aspirations.

What then is the role of the ABE-TESL teacher in the reading classroom? It is first that of a friend who is sensitive to the needs of each student both in the reading area and also in his larger task of existing in America. It is that of a writer or selector of materials that interest the students enough to get them to read in order to find out, not just to read to be reading. It will involve teaching unknown or misunderstood words without getting caught in the cover-50-words-tonight trap. It will include the teaching of the English grammar necessary for the students to get meaning from the strings of English words we call sentences. It will somehow get across what happens when English sentences are joined together into paragraphs. And over it all the teacher will need to be the

student's main interpreter of the American culture reflected in what he reads.

REFERENCES

Amble, Bruce and Siegmar Muehl, "Perceptual Span Training and Reading Achievement." Journal of Educational Psychology 57 (1966):192-206.

Carroll, George R., "The Battle for Better Reading." English Language Teaching, 22 (October 1967):34-40. Reprinted in Teaching English as a Second Language, second edition. Edited by Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972:178-184.

Croft, Kenneth, "Reading". In Readings on English as a Second Language. Edited by Kenneth Croft. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop, 1972, 163-167.

Elliott, A.V.P., "The Reading Lesson". English Language Teaching, 17.2 (1962-3):67-72. Reprinted in Teaching English as a Second Language, second edition. Edited by Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972:173-178.

Fillmore, Charles J. "The Case for Case." In Universals in Linguistic Theory, edited by Emmon Bach and Robert T. Harms. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1968:1-88.

Finocchiaro, Mary and Michael Bonoms, The Foreign Language Learner: A Guide for Teachers. New York: Regents, 1973.

Fries, Charles C., "Learning to Read English as Part of the Oral Approach," ELEC Publications 8 (June 1967):6-11. Reprinted in Readings on English as a Second Language. Edited by Kenneth Croft, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop, 1972, 168-173.

Gladstone, J.R., "Language and Culture," English Language Teaching 23 (January 1969): 114-117. Reprinted in Teaching English as a Second Language, second edition. Edited by Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972:192-195.

Hatch, Evelyn, "Research on Reading a Second Language," in Workpapers in Teaching English as a Second Language, UCLA 7 (June 1973):1-10.

Hall, Robert A., Jr., Sound and Spelling in English. Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1966. Reprinted as "Spelling and Sound in English," in Readings on English as a Second Language. Edited by Kenneth Croft, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop, 1972, 174-187.

Norris, William E., "Advanced Reading: Goals, Techniques, Procedures," TESOL Quarterly 4.1 (March 1970):17-35. Reprinted in Readings on English as a Second Language. Edited by Kenneth Croft, Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1972, 188-207.

Plaister, Ted, "Reading Instruction for College Level Foreign Students," TESOL Quarterly 2.3 (September 1968):164-168.

Povey, John R., "Literature in TESL Programs: The Language and the Culture." TESOL Quarterly 1.2 (June 1967)40-46. Reprinted in Teaching English as a Second Language, second edition. Edited by Harold B. Allen and Russell N. Campbell, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972, 185-191.

Serpell, Robert, "Selective Attention and Interference Between First and Second Languages," H. D. R. U. Reports, University of Zambia, 1968.

Twaddell, Freeman, "Vocabulary Expansion in the ESOL Classroom." TESOL Quarterly 7.1 (March 1973):61-78.

Wardhaugh, Ronald, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction" in Language Learning 21.1 (June 1971):1-26.

Yorio, Carlos A., "Some Sources of Reading Problems in Foreign Language Learners" in Language Learning 21.1 (June 1971):107-115.